COQUIHALLA CANYON RECREATION AREA

MASTER PLAN

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JULY, 1987

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This Master Plan for Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area is submitted for your consideration and approval.

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COQUIHALLA CANYON RECREATION AREA
MASTER PLAN

1.0 PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area was established on May 15, 1986. Its purpose is to provide expanded recreational opportunities for the Fraser Valley District, while conserving special natural and historic features.

Prior to May 15, 1986, the area was developed by the Hope Chamber of Commerce, who actively promotes the tourism use of the area. The canyon tunnels have the potential to be a major tourist attraction for Hope. Present use is primarily by local residents and fishermen; however, visits by tourists are increasing.

There is essentially one main issue involved in this [illegible]: the type and level of appropriate future development.

Based on the purpose of this recreation area and the issues to be addressed, this master plan establishes a set of management guide lines and direction statements. Specifically, the plan recommends:

1. Extinguishing the mineral claims and reclassifying the area to a Class "A" park.

2. Providing various day use developments appropriate to the level of existing use.

3. Acquisition of the property adjacent to the existing parking lot.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Plan Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to improve the quality of recreational opportunities in the Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area and to encourage greater use by the public through a long term development and management strategy.

2.2 Background Summary

Located in a scenic area of the Cascade Mountains, this recreation area consists of a deep river canyon set in a coastal forest environment. The steep sheer rock walls of the canyon and the Coquihalla River offer an exciting visual experience. The abandoned Kettle Valley Railway grade that traverses the recreation area and the five tunnels situated at the base of the canyon are monuments to the remarkable engineering feat that facilitated their construction in 1914.

Local residents use the recreation area for walking and fishing opportunities. Non-residents are attracted to the area for its historic interest and opportunities for viewing and photography.

The recreation area complements the swimming, boating, picnicking and fishing opportunities already established at nearby Kawkawa Lake Provincial Park.

There are a number of private campgrounds located close to the recreation area which will benefit from the added attraction of the tunnels and canyon.

3.0 THE ROLE OF THE PARK

3.1 Regional and Provincial Context

Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area is situated 5 km east of Hope and 1.5 km west of the new Coquihalla Highway (Figure 1). The junction of the Coquihalla and Hope Princeton Highway is just 5 km away from the recreation area.

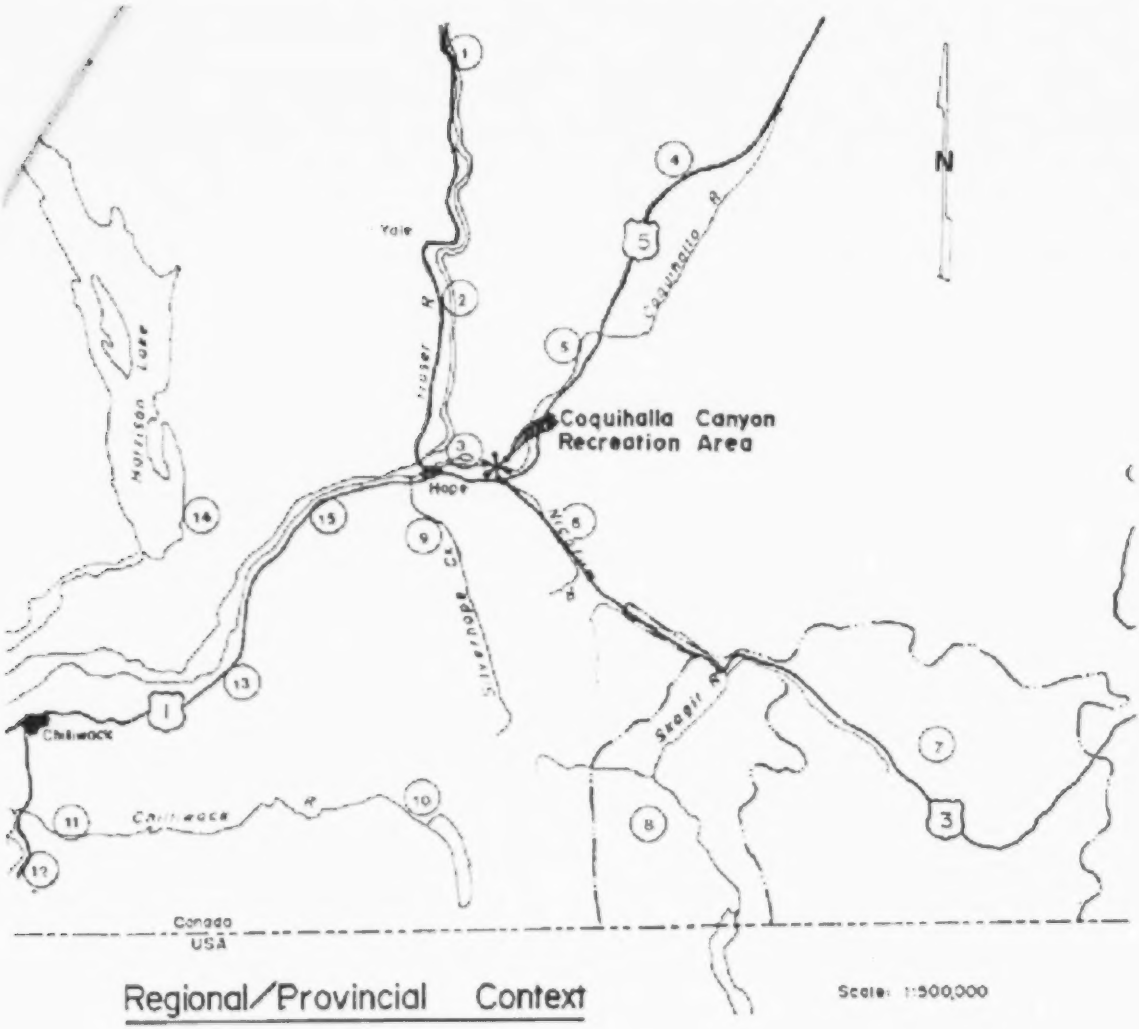
Historically, the area marked the convergence of main trails, such as the Similkameen Road (1860) or the Hudson Bay Company Trail (1849), and history repeats itself again, although modern highways wisely bypassed the formidable canyon itself.

The Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area contains the confluence of the Nicolum Creek and Coquihalla River. The accumulated waters drain a large area east of Hope extending to the Cascade Divide, then enter the Fraser River via a wide delta on which the town of Hope is now built.

The geographic location of the recreation area has regional significance, as it contains part of the early trail system that played a large role in the historic, economic and transportation growth in the developing years of the province.

The area's natural features, as well as the tunnel system and the Kettle Valley Railroad built in 1914, make the recreation area a valuable contribution to the park system, serving the park mandate and preserving these special features for public enjoyment.

Regional/Provincial Context Map



1. Alexander Bridge Provincial Park
2. Emory Creek Provincial Park
3. Kawkawa Lake Provincial Park
4. Coquihalla Summit Provincial Park Proposal
5. Coquihalla River Provincial Park Proposal
6. Nicolum River Provincial Park
7. E.C. Manning Provincial Park
8. Skagit Valley Recreation Area
9. Silver Lake Provincial Park
10. Chilliwack Lake Provincial Park
11. Chilliwack River Provincial Park
12. Cultus Lake Provincial Park
13. Bridal Veil Falls Provincial Park
14. Sasquatch Provincial Park
15. F.H. Barber Provincial Park

FIGURE 1

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3.2 Conservation Role

The natural features of this area provide a good representation of the deep glacial scouring common to the Cascade Range. The canyon is deep and twisting, yet relatively narrow in spots, and in one area formed a natural bridge used by travellers to cross the Coquihalla River until the coming of the railroad.

The historic features of the area, the Hope-Nicola Valley Trail, and the Kettle Valley Railroad, make significant contributions to the cultural resources of the province.

The conservation role of the recreation area, therefore, is to conserve and protect these special features for presentation to park visitors.

3.3 Recreation Role

The recreation role of the park is to provide viewing, walking, picnicking and fishing opportunities to visitors and local residents while enhancing local tourism.

4.0 ZONING

The Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area is divided into two zone types: Natural Environment Zone and Intensive Recreation Zone.

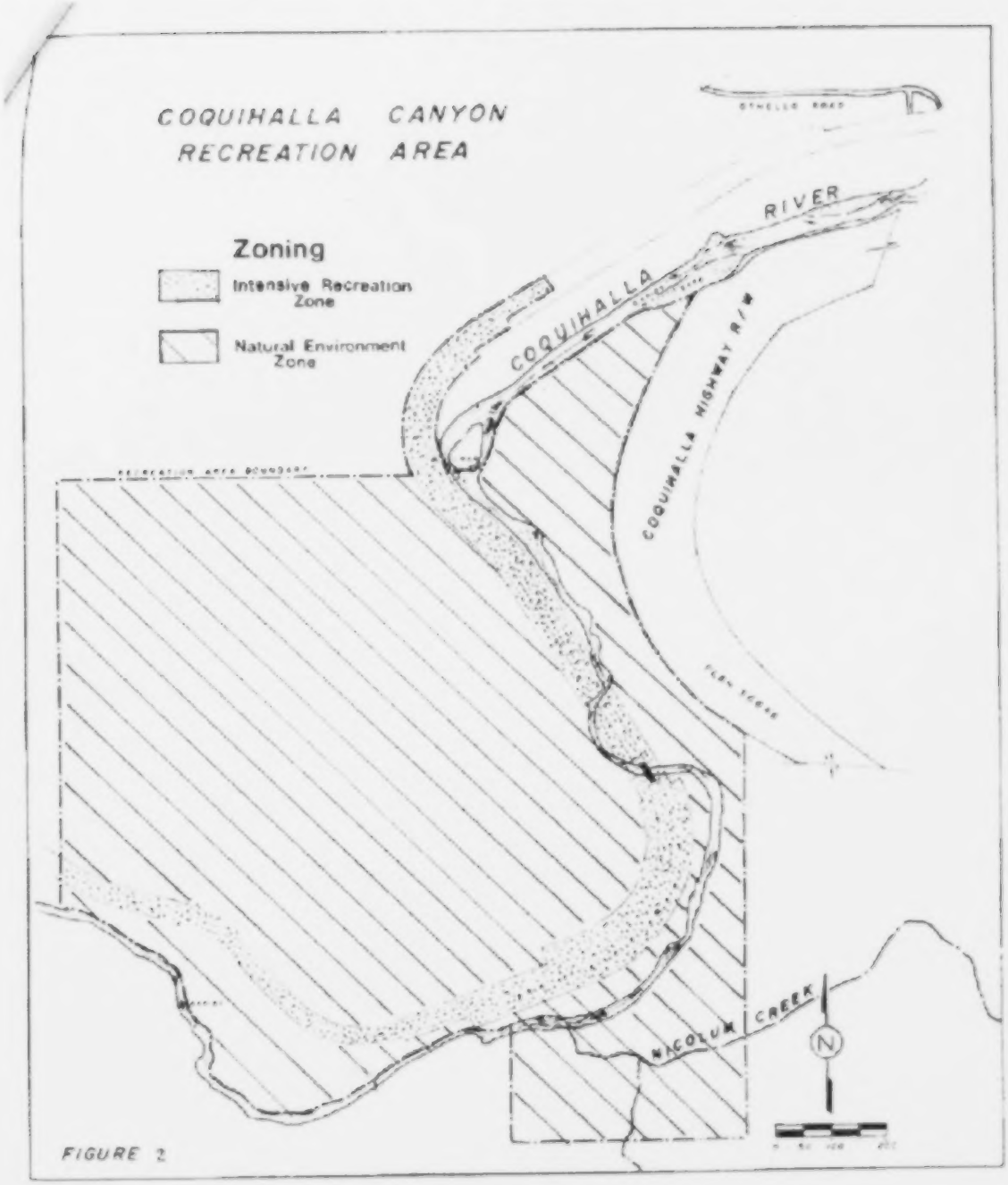
Natural Environment Zone

This zone provides for a variety of generally easily accessible outdoor recreation activities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. This includes primarily the forested area and the river canyon. Within these areas, development is limited to existing and proposed trails.

Intensive Recreation Zone

This subzone provides for the concentration of high use visitor services and facilities. It encompasses the existing trail through the tunnel, the parking lot and the old Kettle Valley Railroad Right-Of-Way.

Zoning Plan



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5.0 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The overall management of resources will be based upon the Park Act, Park Regulations and Ministry and Division policies, and the role of Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area in the overall system of provincial parks and recreation areas.

The resource management objective is to ensure Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division goals are met by:

- protecting the natural resources of the park;
- providing only minimum levels of development appropriate to the existing levels of recreational use;
- monitoring use impacts and resource conditions so that appropriate actions may be taken; and
- establishing resource guidelines that will protect the park's recreation and conservation resources.

5.1 Land Management

5.1.1 Boundary Additions

Private property adjacent to the Coquihalla River should be acquired when available to provide picnicking opportunities and improved parking facilities.

Objectives: To expand picnicking opportunities and upgrade parking facilities.

Action: Initiate discussions with land owner when priorities permit purchase.

5.1.2 Mineral Claims

There are three mineral claims in the recreation area that had tenure prior to the Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area's establishment.

Objectives:
- To place a mineral reserve on the recreation area.
- To extinguish the mineral claims in the recreational area and reclassify the area to a Class "A" park.

Action:
- The Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division will allow exploration of the existing claims. No new alienations will be permitted. Upon expiry, lapse or acquisition of interest in commitments, the area will be reclassified as a Class "A" park.

5.2 Vegetation Management

Generally, the vegetation in the park is a well established mix of mature and immature species. These are unlikely to require any significant action.

Objectives: Maximize the preservation of existing vegetation.

Action: Comply with standard Division policy with respect to forest and vegetation management.

5.3 Fish Management

As the fish populations associated with the park are transient, the management of those species falls largely outside the authority of the park.

Objectives: To ensure fish resources associated with the park are maintained.

Action: Encourage the federal and provincial agencies who manage fishery resources to monitor, protect and enhance the fishing opportunities.

5.4 Wildlife Management

As with fishery resources, the wildlife resources associated with the park are largely transient and lie outside the authority of the park; consequently, management will focus on the smaller mammals and birds resident in the park while monitoring the management of transient wildlife by other agencies.

Objectives: To maintain wildlife levels in the park.

Action: To protect existing habitat and food sources in the park.

5.5 Visual Resource Management

The visual experiences identified in the background report will be given a high priority for preservation and enhancement.

Objectives: To preserve and enhance the major visual experiences of the park.

Actions: To maintain vegetation cover throughout the canyon area and along the railway grade with the exception of a few areas cleared for improved visual access to the river.

6.0 VISITOR SERVICES

6.1 Introduction

The Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area is used by local residents, but the main target group for marketing is visitors traveling the Coquihalla Highway. The visitor services concept for this park is to provide access, information and interpretation of the park resources, and develop complimentary day use opportunities.

The information strategy will be directed toward the target group by providing information prior to entering the park, upon arrival and while engaging in park activities.

6.2 Visitor Opportunities

There are four main visitor services opportunities available or potentially available at the Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area. They are viewing, walking, fishing and picnicking. The objectives for each opportunity are as follows:

- Viewing: to enhance the viewing opportunities provided by the canyon and tunnels through an interpretive information program.
- Walking: to provide a trail through the tunnels and upgrade the Hope-Nicola cattle trail.
- Fishing: to maintain access to the river.
- Picnicking: to diversify and enhance park opportunities.

For the Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area to realize its recreation and conservation objectives, the following facilities and services are proposed:

- provide information services such as signing and a brochure on the history of the tunnels.
- upgrade the suspension bridge and replace fencing with rock walls.
- develop a small picnic area between the first tunnel and the parking lot.
- upgrade the Hope-Nicola cattle trail and expand the trail system to either a loop or cross trail to the parking lot.

6.3 Management Services

a) Headquarters and Service Yards-

The service yard currently located at Emory Creek will serve the needs of the park.

b) Site and Facility Design Standards-

All sites and facilities developed for public use within the park will meet the design standards of the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division. Attention will be paid to consideration of safety, visual values, and operational efficiency while providing rustic, durable and cost efficient products.

c) Safety and Health-

The safety of park visitors and management personnel is a paramount concern. Natural hazards easily accessible to the public will be appropriately posted, removed or minimized. There will be periodic safety inspections of all high use areas. Parks Division has no internal search and rescue capability, but will put its resources at the disposal of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Provincial Emergency Program in the event of any emergency in the park.

6.4 Marketing and Information Program

The marketing strategy for the recreation area focuses on directing facilities and services to the user groups with the most potential for providing increased levels of park use and tourist activities. These groups have been identified as primarily the visitors arriving by vehicle who are travelling the Coquihalla Highway. The main experience to be marketed will be the tunnels and canyon attractions.

Park maps, brochures and staff will provide pre-visit information to all visitors.

Info centres at Hope and Merrit will continue to be relied upon to provide information on the park to highway travellers. The parks along the Coquihalla Highway will each provide regional recreation information including information on the Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area. With lack of a direct access off the highway close to the recreation area, the need to provide good signing is essential, particularly signage directing northbound traffic to the park.

Special events promotion for the recreation area could be done in conjunction with the local summer festival "Hope Brigade Days" and offer guided tours and interpretive programs.

7.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The majority of actions recommended in this plan can be implemented immediately as part of the park's normal management procedures. Other actions, such as new development, will be phased over a period of time as regional and district priorities dictate, and in accordance with the following levels of priority.

PHASE I (Highest Priority)

- provide information services
- replace suspension bridge
- develop small picnic area
- upgrade Hope-Nicola cattle trail

PHASE II (Lowest Priority)

- build crossover or loop trail off the Hope-Nicola cattle trail

APPENDIX I

Background Report

APPENDIX I

Background Report

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area is located 5 km east of Hope on the Coquihalla River in the Cascade Mountain Range. It contains 135 hectares and includes the confluence of the Coquihalla River, and Nicolum Creek and the Coquihalla Canyon. Also contained in the area is the Kettle Valley Railroad Right-of-Way, which contains the Quintette Tunnels and a wood/steel railway trestle.

Road access can be gained either from Othello Road via Hope, or Othello Road via the Coquihalla Highway, 5 km north of the junctions of Highways 3 and 5.

The Coquihalla Canyon was explored as early as 1849 as a possible route to the interior, but was not adopted for use until 1876. At this time, the B.C. Department of Lands and Works built the Hope-Nicola Valley trail by contract. The trail started from the Hope-Similkameen Trail at Mile 5 from Hope and descended the side hill to cross the Coquihalla River at a natural bridge site in the canyon. Here the bedrock on either side comes within three metres of touching. The trail crosses the river on a timber trestle and climbs the side hill for 280 metres before passing through the saddle and on up the Coquihalla Pass and on into Nicola Valley.

This was the main market trail for the interior grassland ranches. Use of the trail by cattle diminished when the C.P.R. main line started operating the Thompson and Fraser Valleys in 1884. By 1889, the trail was used primarily for herding horses and shortly after the trail was abandoned with the coming of the Kettle Valley Railroad.

In 1916, the C.P.R. ran the Kettle Valley line to the Interior Plateau. The Coquihalla Canyon was the route chosen by Andrew McCulloch, who was the chief engineer at that time. To facilitate this route, he built five tunnels through the canyon which were called the Quintette Tunnels. The tunnels were a remarkable engineering feat and drew wide acclaim throughout North America, but after nearly 50 years of service, the route was officially closed in July of 1961.

A recreational reserve was placed over the area in 1964 to protect the park resources for future study. A study was done in 1977 and park values were found to be high. The Hope Chamber of Commerce recommended the establishment of a Class "A" park and to that end, initiated basic park development through a Canada Works Grant in 1985.

2.0 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

2.1 Physiography

The recreation area is located in the Coast-Cascade Dry Belt Regional Landscape of the Coast-Mountain Natural Region. Typical to the Cascade Mountain Range, the area consists of sedimentary and volcanic rocks, strongly folded and metamorphosed, intruded by granite batholiths. The 100m deep canyon has almost shear granite walls that are fragmentizing continually due to their geological nature and climatic erosion.

The Coquihalla River runs a narrow, twisting route through the gorge. Due to the elevation change in the canyon, the river is full of cascades and rapids at this point. The water levels fluctuate dramatically each season which can cause large log jams in the canyon.

2.2 Fish and Wildlife

In view of the limited size of the recreation area, most of the fish and wildlife resources are transient and present only on occasion. The exception would be small mammals such as ground squirrels and raccoons. Songbirds species are also prevalent including varied thrush and black-throated grey warbler.

A bedrock barrier below the tunnels prevents anadromous species from using the upper section of the river except for summer run steelhead. The upper section contains a good population of Dolly Varden. Below the barrier, the river supports a run of coho, chum and sockeye.

2.3 Visual Resource

The visual resource of the recreation area consists of two main visual opportunities.

On entering the recreation area and looking northeast, a visitor will have the rapids of the Coquihalla River in the foreground and the forested Cascade Range in the background. This view will be enhanced in the fall season as the deciduous trees turn colours along the river.

The other view is that of the canyon itself. Following the railroad grade south, you are confronted with the shear narrow walls of the canyon 90 metres above you and the cascading waters of the Coquihalla River below.

The view along the Hope-Nicola cattle trail is not as spectacular, but offers a good visual experience in a canopied coniferous forest with a steep trail engineered through it.

All of these visual opportunities are reinforced by the loud, turbulant river that pours through this narrow gap in the mountain pass.

2.4 Vegetation

The park is situated in the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone (Krajina, 1970). The characteristic species associated with this zone and presently on the site include Coastal Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*), and in well drained areas, Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Other existing species include Broadleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) and Alder (*Alnus*) species. The average diameter of the tree cover is approximately 25 centimetres, with an average height of 12 metres. There are a few exceptionally large trees over 25 metres in height and diameters of 60 centimetres. The understory is sparse and consists mainly of Sword Fern (*Polystichum munitum*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum pubescens*), Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) and moss (*Musci*) species.

2.5 Atmosphere

The climate in the recreation area as recorded from a weather station at Kawkawa Lake in 1976, is similar to the coastal environment maritime zone. The summer is relatively warm and dry, while winter is usually cold and wet. The actual total precipitation in 1976 was 128.3 centimetres, with winter snowfall measuring 161.3 centimetres. Only 33 centimetres of total precipitation fell during May to September. Temperatures during this period range from 12 to 16 degrees Celsius.

2.6 Heritage Resources

The Heritage Resources in the recreation area include the Quintette Tunnels and the Hope-Nicola cattle trails. Both have good interpretive potential.

The Quintette Tunnels are significant historically for two reasons:

a) they were built in the early era of railroad development in the province, and

b) they represent significant technical achievement for the type of construction used during that period.

The section of the Hope-Nicola cattle trail that lies in the recreation area dates back to 1846 and the side hill cuts that traverse the canyon slopes are still evident. This was a main market trail for the Nicola Valley and the Interior Plateau. Its significance is that it was part of the early trail system that opened the interior to economic growth.

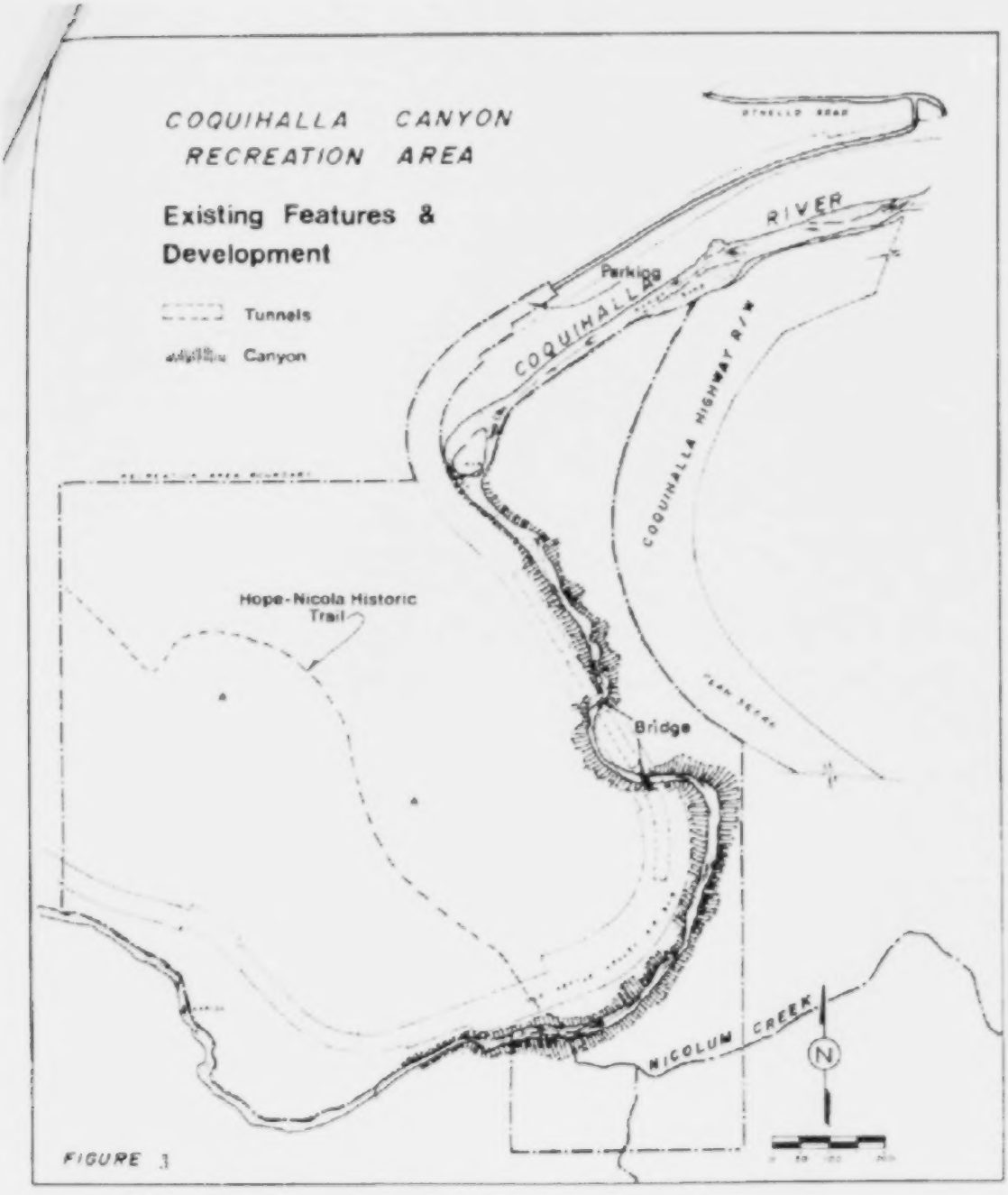
2.7 Resource Analysis

The natural and heritage features of the park are the Coquihalla River, the Coquihalla Canyon, and the Quintette Tunnels, all of which contribute to the overall conservation and recreation goals of the division.

The recreational focus of the area is the Quintette Tunnels in the Coquihalla Canyon, which form the main feature for serving the recreation division's goals. The visual and historic opportunities are the main reasons for attracting visitors.

The division's conservation goals will be served through protecting the trail, canyon and tunnels as they represent the pioneering achievements of the early British Columbians.

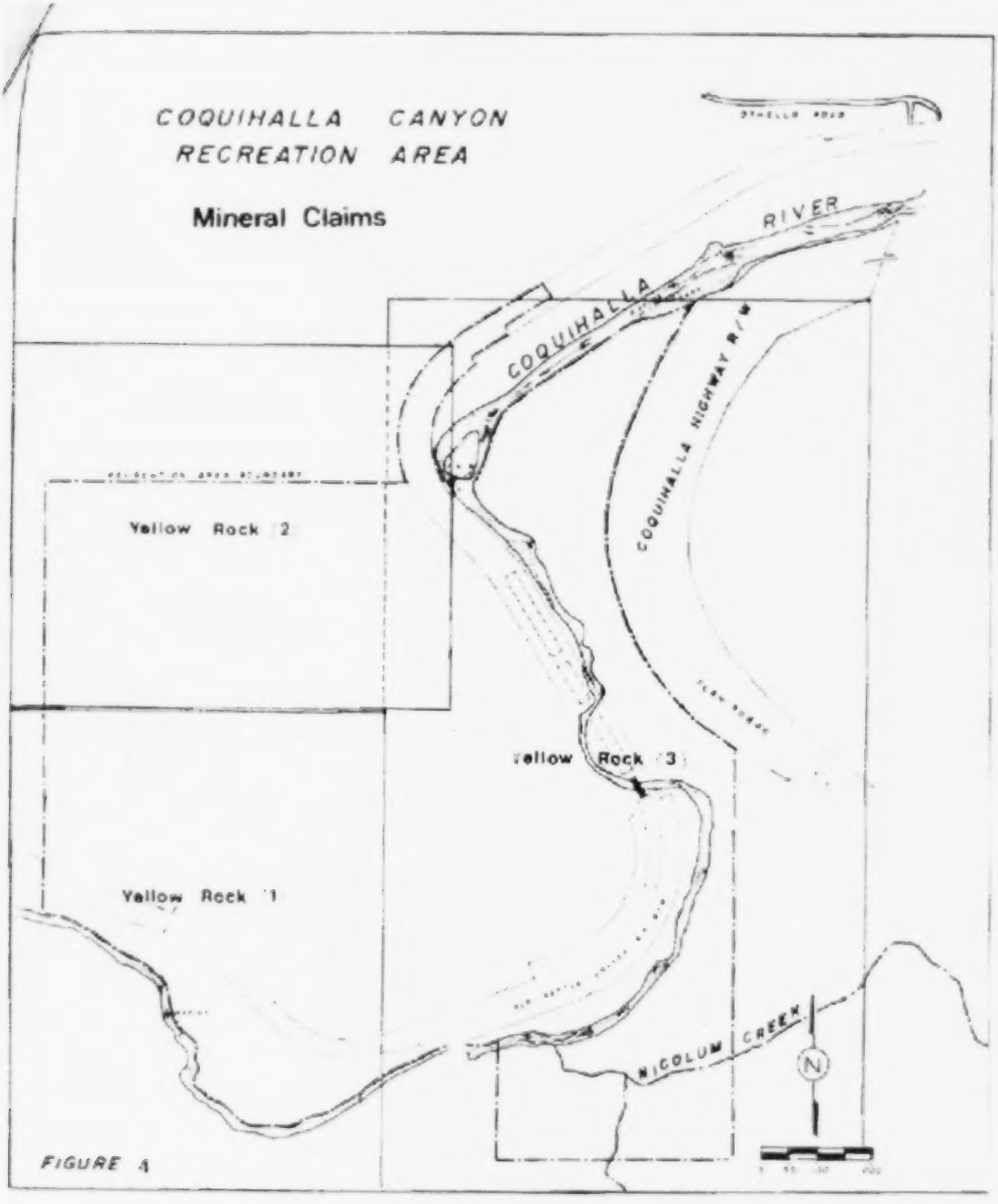
Existing Features and Development Map



3.0 TENURES, OCCUPANCY RIGHTS AND JURISDICTIONS

Lease and Permits	:	None
Fee Simple Inholding	:	None
Forest Tenures	:	None
Water Rights	:	None
Right-of-Way	:	
Mineral Claims (Figure 3)	:	Yellow Rock #1
		Yellow Rock #2
		Yellow Rock #3
Trespasses	:	None
Statutory Jurisdiction	:	Coquihalla River & tribs -
		(1) NO FISHING
		(a) above the lower tunnel, Oct. 1 to July 31
		(b) below the lower tunnel. May 1 to Sept. 30
		(2) STEELHEAD RELEASE above the lower tunnel, Aug. 1 to Sept. 30
		(3) FLY FISHING, Aug. 1 to Sept. 30.

Mineral Claims Map



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4.0 EXISTING FACILITIES

Most of the existing facilities were established by the Hope Chamber of Commerce through a Canada Works Grant prior to the area being designated a recreation area. This includes the main trail, the suspension bridge, a steel and timber truss bridge, various information shelters and stoneworks.

The facilities will be removed and/or replaced as they become unsafe, redundant or diminished.

When the area was designated a recreation area, the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division developed a 21 vehicle parking lot, pit toilets and an information shelter.

5.0 MARKET ANALYSIS

5.1 Existing Use

With the recreation area being recently established, there is very little data available on existing use. Random visual counts taken by park staff from August through October of 1986 indicate an average of 20 visits a day. An estimated 80% of the visitors were referred to the area by either the Hope Chamber of Commerce or local residents, and 20% were highway travellers.

5.2 Demand

As with existing use, information on demand is equally sparse; however, it is anticipated that the demand for the area will increase as the Coquihalla Highway traffic counts increase, information programs are implemented and park developments are completed.

5.3 Supply

The supply for outdoor recreation opportunities in the area is focused on Provincial Parks and the private/community service supplied at Hope and within about a half hour drive of the Coquihalla Canyon Recreation Area. Outdoor recreational opportunities provided by the private sector include the theme parks such as Flintstone Park, Minter Gardens and also the numerous private campgrounds as listed in Appendix II.

6.0 KEY ISSUES

6.1 Type and Level of Appropriate Development

Although the recreation area has had some initial development, this was primarily to improve public access and safety. Further development could significantly enhance the park's visual opportunities by encouraging picnicking, hiking and fishing, although there is no evidence of demand for these opportunities by the public currently using the recreation area.

Option #1: Maintain Status Quo

Maintaining the present situation would have no short term ramifications in view of the present low use levels. Over the course of several years, however, repeat visitors may require more diverse opportunities to encourage return visits.

Option #3: Develop Other Park Opportunities Now

Developing the other park opportunities would, with the exception of the proposed trails, require very little funding or resources. The main ramification of implementing this development at this time is its affect on other priorties.

APPENDIX II: Outdoor Recreation Suppliers

APPENDIX II

OUTDOOR RECREATION SUPPLIERS

	Camping	# of Sites	Fishing	Swimming	Picnicking	Hiking	Winter Recreation	Viewing	Group Use	Boating	Day Use Parking
Provincial Parks and Recreation Areas:											
Bridal Veil Falls					■	■		■			60
Coquihalla River			■		■						30
E.C. Manning	■	373	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	1375
Emory Creek	■	34	■		■			■		■	
Kawkawa Lake			■	■	■						105
Nicolum River	■	0	■		■						10
Municipal Parks:											
Memorial Park (Hope)					■				■		
Private Campgrounds:*											
Bridal Falls Camperland	■	100									
Camper's Roost Park	■	52		■							
Canyon Alpine Motel	■	20									
Coquihalla Campsite	■	135		■							
Cariboo Trail Campground	■	36									
Flood Falls Campsite	■	33	■								
Holiday Motel Trailer Park	■	15		■							
Hope K.O.A.	■	150		■							
Hunterville Campsite	■	30									
Poole's Evergreen Resort	■	100	■	■							
Snowhite Campsite	■	40	■								
Wild Rose Campground	■	45									

* Some of these areas' activities are not on the suppliers' property, but are within the vicinity.

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